

The Census Access Project

This paper summarises a major initiative to improve the dissemination of Census results, with more details provided in the Annex. It seeks the early and full involvement of Census users.

1. ONS has been awarded funding from the Government Invest to Save Budget (ISB) for a project – known as Census Access and to commence in April 2000 – to deliver the results of the 2001 Census in an unrestricted, user friendly, and ‘free’ in effect way throughout the public sector. ISB provides support for projects that involve two or more public bodies getting together to deliver services that are innovative, joined up, and more efficient. The awards were made after a bidding process which narrowed down an original field of around 500 to 104 successful projects.
2. The concept for the project grew from needs expressed during the 1999 output roadshow consultations, and from the need to meet wider policies in which access to information is at the heart of modernised government. ISB offered an ideal opportunity to help break down the barriers to joint working with Census information.
3. The concept gained the support of key players among government bodies, the health service, local government, and the universities who in turn serve wider public needs. This is reflected in the partners in the bid and project – the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, the Department of Health on behalf of the NHS, the Local Government Association, and the Economic and Social Research Council – who joined ONS.
4. As a recognition of the co-ordination of the 2001 Census output strategy between the three UK Census organisations, the bid proposed that the project could be beneficially extended to cover the UK as a whole, although recognising that ISB did not automatically extend to Scotland or Northern Ireland. The current position is that ISB funding has been provided for the project to cover England and Wales, and that pro rata extension of funding would have to be arranged by the organisations in Scotland and Northern Ireland for the whole of the UK to be included.

Objectives

5. Census Access combines innovation in both policy and technology. It will supply whatever a user needs from a single dataset of statistics, geography and supporting information, with a choice of means of delivery, and facilities to suit all levels of expertise. It will remain responsive to changes in user needs and technology. The project will start with a bottom line objective of delivering the complete standard local statistics (that is, including Census Area Statistics at Output Area level) with currently achievable technology, but will then develop products and services which will improve on the bottom line, including the potential to ‘roll out’ the system to deliver other statistical information at the neighbourhood level.
6. More information about Census Access is provided in the Annex which is an edited version of the bid for ISB funding, following the standard structure for the bids.

Funding

7. The Census Access project will be run alongside the existing 2001 Census Output policy and production projects, to meet Treasury requirements for the ring fencing of ISB funded activity, and will complement and add to existing planned and funded activity. The additional funding has been provided because, under the Census Act, activities which could have been covered by Census core funding would not have sufficiently improved the quality of service. Some £2.1 million of ISB funds have been provided for deployment over a three year period - £0.6 million in 2000-01, £0.8 million in 2001-02, and £0.8 million in 2002-03. ONS will add a further £0.7 million to the project funds (25% of the total project budget), as required by the terms of ISB funding.
8. The current plan is to offset the ONS contribution from costs recovered for the standard local statistics through project partners. But a bonus for users is that some of the ISB funds will be used to make a 'top slice' contribution to meeting the cost of the local statistics to pump prime the service. Customised output cannot of course be funded in the same way because there would be no limit on demands, but improvements to the systems to produce customised output will be covered by the project. All output would remain Crown copyright, and all supply and use would be subject to agreement, but conditions of use would encourage joint working for public sector purposes.
9. In summary, the cost of output which will meet a substantial proportion of users' requirements will be met up front, with the bonus of a 'top slice' contribution, making the output 'free' in effect for public sector purposes. Benefits will be from savings through the efficiency of having a service with less need for duplication of effort in the public sector, and through informed decision making based on widespread, timely and co-ordinated applications of Census information in areas of policy and spending involving billions of pounds of resources. The project, however, will also bring the results of the Census to individuals and community groups, schools and school children in a way that has never been possible before.

Next steps

10. The next steps are to
 - i) provide a project implementation plan by mid March to Treasury;
 - ii) to finalise arrangements between the partners in the project;
 - iii) to involve users fully in the development of the project (see section 8 of the Annex), with an early opportunity provided through the forthcoming round of consultation on the Census Area Statistics; and
 - iv) to publicise the project and to bring together all potential contributors.

Conclusion

The Advisory Groups are invited to

- a) **note the information on Census Access set out in the paper;**
- b) **comment on any aspect of the project; and**
- c) **put forward suggestions of ways to ensure that the user community is fully involved in the development of the project.**

ONS Census Division
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CENSUS ACCESS

A project to provide a 2001 Census public sector dataset

Contents

1. Introduction

Overview
Background
Organisations involved

2. Objectives

3. Funding Requirements

4. Innovation

5. Benefits to users

6. Estimated savings/improved services

7. Additionality test

8. Project cycle management

Accounts and audit
Monitoring and Evaluation
Project management

Conclusion – meeting Invest to Save Criteria

Contact Point

CENSUS ACCESS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Overview

- 1.1 The 2001 Census will provide the most important single source of information about the number and characteristics of the population, uniquely so for communities at the ward level and below. Effective dissemination of the Census results is critical if the needs of modernised government are to be met, particularly in tackling problems such as social exclusion which require ready access to information.
- 1.2 The aim is to set up a project – Census Access – to ensure that the benefits of the investment in the Census (£227 million) are realised through informed decision making based on widespread, timely, and co-ordinated application of the results of the Census. This additional project and funding is required because, under the Census legislation, activities which could be covered by core funding would not sufficiently improve the quality and effectiveness of the service to users. The project will change a reactive stance to an active stance.
- 1.3 The concept grew from needs expressed during extensive consultation in April/May 1999 on output from the Census (the output roadshow), and was subsequently welcomed by users. There are three key aims:
- to remove the barriers of access to Census information and deliver it in user friendly ways to the public sector (central and local government, the health service, schools and universities, libraries and the wider community)
 - to combine the information from the census into an integrated package accessible at any level of expertise
 - to widen dissemination and to provide conditions which encourage public organisations to work together.

Census output is also widely used in the private sector to support investment decisions and commercial activity. The private sector will benefit from the improvements provided by the project, but this has not so far been a direct target of the initiative.

- 1.4 The concept for the project combines policy, information and services, and can be expressed as six key components:
- **a policy framework** implementing broader Government initiatives in a modernised approach to the dissemination of statistical information.
 - **a user community** which is inclusive, whose requirements are represented in the plans for the project through thorough research, and who are involved in a continuing process of consultation and feedback.
 - **a dataset** combining statistics, a geographical framework, information about the data (metadata), and supporting software into an integrated package.
 - **a service** to deliver whatever users require from the dataset to their ‘desktops’ – normally but not necessarily in electronic form – with training and back-up, under terms to encourage use of the data in a joined-up way.

- **tools** to access the data to suit all levels of expertise, with software to view and manipulate the data and to export them for further analysis.
 - **a longer term strategy** of upgrading to keep abreast of users' requirements and technical developments, and to develop the potential to deliver other statistical information which is required for joint working.
- 1.5 The value of Census information in making informed decisions is indicated by the billions of pounds of resources allocated with the benefit of Census information to local and health authorities. Similarly it is used as a basis for many important policy decisions. Yet there are many examples of public sector organisations that have found it difficult to access or afford the information. The aim is to remove such barriers.
- 1.6 Under the terms of ISB, the bid was made for a project for England and Wales. However, the 2001 Census in the UK is being co-ordinated by the three UK Census Offices, and the project could be beneficially extended to cover the UK as a whole, and the bid proposed that the project should cover Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Background

The Census Offices

- 1.7 There are three organisations responsible for the taking of censuses in the UK. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for taking censuses in England and Wales. In the remainder of the UK the census function is devolved to the General Register Office (Scotland) (GRO(S)) and to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA), but, where appropriate, 2001 Census activities are co-ordinated on a UK basis. References in this note are generally to "the Census Offices" where there is a co-ordinated approach, and to "ONS" where an activity is unique to England and Wales.
- 1.8 This bid was made for England and Wales to reflect the responsibilities of ONS, in the knowledge that ISB funding did not extend automatically to Wales. Extension to Scotland and Northern Ireland would reflect the degree to which the output from 2001 Censuses is being co-ordinated on a UK basis, and would provide a consistent service to Census users throughout the UK.

Legislation

- 1.9 The Census is governed by the Census Act 1920. Dissemination of the results from the Census is covered by the two sub-sections of Section 4 of the Act. The first requires reports to be prepared and laid before Parliament. The second permits further statistical abstracts to be prepared at the request and cost of any organisation or individual.
- 1.10 Although the reports to Parliament contain key information, only a very small amount of the information about local areas or particular groups of people produced from a modern Census can be included in the reports (just some 2 per cent of all the statistics produced from the 1991 Census). Any organisation or individual that needs more than the information contained in the reports must, in principle, initiate their own separate arrangements to obtain it. In practice, in previous Censuses, the Census Offices have brought users together to encourage a co-ordinated approach to the definition of requirements.
- 1.11 Whilst the current approach (that is, as applied to 1991 Census and earlier output) has some benefits, barriers remain to effective, timely and consistent access, for example:
- the Census information is not available as an integrated package, and users have to assemble statistics, geographical information, and software from different sources
 - users have to make separate arrangements to find out about the information, obtain and pay for it, and may not achieve a common basis of information

- in the situation where supply is through a series of discrete transactions, the Census Offices impose constraints on the free movement of the Census information at the outset to ensure that their cost recovery duties are met
- the Census Offices may seem remote to individual members of the public, and there is no obligation on intermediary organisations to provide assistance.

Without a new initiative, arrangements will vary across the public sector, and might be partial or even absent. Individual members of the public are likely to be least well served.

- 1.12 The possibility of amending the Census Act to allow more flexibility has been considered in planning for the 2001 Census, but Parliamentary time appeared unlikely to be made available, and no other legislation provides a basis for a new approach.
- 1.13 The project will take the initiative in breaking down barriers to joint working by those who wish use Census information for public sector purposes, whilst respecting the terms of the Census Act. It will provide up-front support and funding for the development of comprehensive and co-ordinated package of output to meet the stated needs of public sector users, minimising the constraining effects of the cost recovery required by the Census Act.

Consultation

- 1.14 There is a well established and comprehensive process of consultation between the Census Offices and Census users. The Census Access project originates from needs expressed by users. The objectives, the innovations proposed, and the expected benefits all reflect input from users. This has come from permanently established advisory groups representing central government, local authorities, the health service, the business community, and the universities, as well as from a number of expert working groups. Most recently, in April and May 1999, the Census Offices began a major consultation exercise on output from the 2001 Census with open meetings throughout the UK. The process is continuing as plans are refined through further discussion.

Standard area statistics

- 1.15 The core of the proposed dataset would be standard area statistics. These provide quite detailed information from every topic covered in the Census, showing the inter-relations between many variables, in a standard form which is comparable across the whole country and between areas at all geographical levels. They are the basis for reports to Parliament on local authorities, regions and the country as a whole, but are also made available for smaller areas down to neighbourhoods of around 100 households. They form a uniquely detailed and valuable picture of the country, with vital information for area based policies.
- 1.16 Such standard area statistics have been produced from the 1971, 1981 and 1991 Censuses, and the recent consultations on output from the 2001 Census have produced strongly supported cases from all sectors of Census users for standard area statistics. The consultation also produced strong support for the introduction at the lowest geographical level in England and Wales of 'Output Areas' specially built from postcodes, but also fitting within wards and higher level geographies. This will provide a consistent small area base throughout the UK. The geographical base will also be created for the first time in digital form, to be available as part of an integrated package with the statistical information in electronic form, which will let the user map the data to see geographical patterns.

Organisations involved

1.17 The community of census users is extensive. It involves government organisations, the health service, local authorities and the universities, as well as the private sector, which in turn represent and serve wider public needs. All need 2001 Census data, and all key players in the public sector indicated a willingness to join the project and to support the bid for funding.

Partnership

1.18 There are three forms of partnership in the project:

- funding partners – a consortium of public sector bodies
- development partners – providing expertise in particular areas of the project
- partners in wider developments which complement the project, possibly other ISB funded work.

Partners may feature under one or more of these headings. The services and the content of the dataset to be delivered by the project would be decided by consultation with the partners as part of the project. The funding partners would separately decide how their contributions to the cost of the dataset should be shared among themselves.

1.19 There is a close and special relationship with the legislatures. Census output is made available to the Libraries of the Houses of Lords and Commons, and the services and dataset provided by the project would be automatically available to the Libraries, and to the other legislatures in the UK if required. Use of the services and dataset would also be made by the Statistical Office of the European Union

1.20 The funding partners will be in a key position, not only as major users but in enabling access by all other public sector users, although the funding partners would not necessarily have an intermediate role in handling the supply of the dataset. There could be a direct supply route between any end user in the public sector and the Census organisations. In some cases the funding partners have a direct relationship with end users, but the funding partners may be considered to have a joint responsibility for the wider community of public sector users.

Partners in the bid and project

1.21 **The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions**, as a major user of Census information, particularly for resource allocation, agreed to represent the interests of government bodies, including the Government Offices for the Regions, at the bid stage. The current intention is that other government bodies would join the project and provide a share of the funding.

1.22 **The Department of Health** has agreed to join the project on behalf of both DH and the NHS in England as a funding partner.

1.23 **The Local Government Association** has agreed to join the project on behalf of all local authorities in England and Wales as a funding partner, channelling funds from individual authorities, and as a development partner. The ISB Secretariat agreed that this arrangement would not be in conflict with the involvement of an individual local authority in any other ISB bid or project.

1.24 **The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)** has agreed to join the project on behalf of the universities as a funding and development partner.

Wales

- 1.25 The Census function is not devolved to Wales and is a responsibility of ONS. The Statistical Directorate of the Welsh Assembly was content for the bid to be taken forward on an England and Wales or UK basis. ONS is arranging for funding to be provided by partners in Wales to parallel contributions made in England.

Scotland and Northern Ireland

- 1.26 The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency supports the extension of the Census Access project to Northern Ireland to avoid the inefficiency of having parallel projects. The General Register Office Scotland was content for the bid to be considered on a UK basis. Some additional funding would be provided by partners in Scotland and Northern Ireland if the project is extended.

Ordnance Survey

- 1.27 The geographical framework for the dataset will be provided through a partnership between ONS and Ordnance Survey. This covers the Ordnance Survey information from which the framework will be derived and terms for access to the geographical information to meet the objectives of the project. Joint use will substantially increase the benefits from the information supplied by both ONS and Ordnance Survey.

2. OBJECTIVES

Key objectives

- 2.1 The primary objective of the project is to provide access to the results of the 2001 Census in an unrestricted way throughout the public sector to meet the needs of modernised government. The project will ensure that this service is delivered, and is not a matter of chance.
- 2.2 The main change will be a freeing up of access to Census information, enabling interchange between bodies working on joint initiatives for any public sector purpose, and providing much wider availability of the information
- 2.3 The primary financial objective of the project is to realise the benefits of the investment in the Census through widespread, timely and co-ordinated application of the results of the Census to help informed decision making, and to help improve the quality and effectiveness of services delivered to the public. (Expenditure on the 2001 Census in England and Wales is estimated at £227 million for the period 1993 – 2006.) A further financial objective is to achieve savings through avoidance of duplicated effort and reduced bureaucracy, which will lower direct costs both to ONS, as the supplier, and to the customers. In addition to achieving these benefits, the project would aim to pay for itself through direct cost savings within the period over which the service operates.

Supplementary objectives

- 2.4 There are further objectives relating to four aspects of the project, and for each there is a brief concluding statement indicating the difference that the project will make.

Working together

- to bring together all key players in the public sector
- to make the benefits of the project available throughout the UK, reflecting the UK basis for the planning of output

The key players have not previously joined a single project.

Taking the initiative

- to initiate the project in time to avoid duplicated services being developed in the public sector
- to prepare users to make the most beneficial use of the Census at the earliest possible time
- to inform all potential beneficiaries and set up a system for interchange between suppliers and customers

Access to Census information has not previously been provided through a single initiative.

Finding solutions

- to research needs, seek best practices and set out options for the service
- to review options and decide best value solutions
- to keep user requirements and technical progress under continual review, building in contingencies for flexibility and change in the service
- to ensure a smooth transition from the funded project phase to the service phase after 2002-03 until a possible 2011 Census

There has not previously been a comprehensive set of solutions.

Providing services

- to serve all users equally well through appropriate means, with special effort for those outside larger public sector organisations
- to meet the cost recovery requirements of the Census Act 1920, but where possible add value to the project from complementary activity already funded
- to build on the platform provided by the project to improve services to the private sector, particularly through value added activities
- to consider possibilities and potential benefits of developing the service to cover other statistical data.

Levels of service have previously been quite varied.

3. FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

3.1 The proposal is to provide a package of data and services. The funding requirement is, in the main, to develop the services, but about one third of the funding is required to create the dataset. Without a change, the costs of accessing a large part of the results of the 2001 Census would fall entirely on individual public sector organisations. The intention is to provide a single service to deliver the results and to 'prime the pump' through top slice funding to cover part of the cost of the dataset, whilst making some direct charges to meet both the requirements of ISB and to retain some of the 'discipline of the market'. The total cost of the package for England and Wales is in the region of £2.8 million, divided roughly into three annual parts, of which £2.1 million was sought, and has now been provided, from ISB funds.

Deployment of funds

3.2 It is intended that the project would be carried out through a small team at ONS, including the project manager, and through the financial support of activity outside ONS. Such activity might include academic research, or consultancy or product development services procured on a competitive basis. Other resources would be allocated to promoting the service and providing information to users. Best value would be sought, with a reasonable level of flexibility in the deployment of resources. An implementation plan will be prepared at the start of the project, with regular reviews by the management board.

Funded activities could include:

Project team	-	additional staff at ONS
Support of research	-	'topping up' the funding of academic research in progress or contributing to the funding of new research
Procured input	-	consultancy, services, or product development obtained by competitive procurement
Software	-	development or procurement of software deliver services or products, or to access and manipulate the dataset
User services	-	consultations, promotions, user support, monitoring and evaluation
Dataset construction	-	the preparation of the statistical output, geographical framework and metadata (where such costs are not met from the core Census funding for the preparation of reports)

4. INNOVATIONS

4.1 The Government stated an intention in the White Paper on the 2001 Census (CM4253) that "technological developments should be harnessed in the 2001 Census in order to improve the accuracy, timeliness, accessibility and user friendliness" of output. The Census Access project will be the principal means of fully implementing the latter two improvements.

4.2 The direction of technological development in the Census is determined in part through consultation with users in the UK and by research in the Census Offices, but also through interchanges with Census organisations in the rest of the world such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Canada and the US Bureau of the Census, or with other organisations carrying out similar data dissemination operations. Broadly speaking, the technological developments envisaged for service delivery in the project have been successfully tried elsewhere in some form, so the project will not be carrying a high risk from 'leading edge' technology. However, the developments will in the main be new to Census dissemination in the UK. There will be a marked improvement and contrast with the technology used in the 1991 Census.

Access to all

- 4.3 The project will take the results of the Census to users in uniformly accessible ways, and into a new era of electronically based dissemination. It will build on the established strengths of the Census in providing comparable figures for all parts of the country, and would, for the first time, deliver whatever a user requires from a single dataset containing
- statistics for all area levels in pre-planned forms
 - a geographic framework for use with geographical information systems (GISs)
 - supporting information (metadata)
 - easy to use software to provide access, visualisation and analysis of the data for varying levels of expertise.
- 4.4 Results will be delivered concurrently for national, regional and local areas for the first time after a modern UK Census to allow immediate comparability between areas.
- 4.5 The dataset will be supplemented by cost-effective services to supply customised output for more specialised purposes.

Information in advance

- 4.6 The project aims to prepare users to make the most beneficial use of the Census at the earliest possible time. Information, training material, and trial datasets will be available through Census Access before the main phase of the delivery of results from the 2001 Census. This might include an extract of 1991 Census local statistics, designed to meet the widely expressed need for information for 1991-2001 comparison, but not previously produced by the Census organisations.
- 4.7 Consideration will also be given to making the standard area statistics as a whole from the 1991 and earlier Censuses available at an early date without restriction for public sector purposes to complement the 2001 initiative, but it would not be an objective of the project to provide a specific infrastructure for delivery of this earlier data.

A choice of access

- 4.8 The means of delivery will include
- a complete package on electronic media such as CD-ROM to meet the needs of regular users
 - a simplified package for less experienced users, with delivery via the Internet to schools
 - an on-line Internet system to provide access as required, aimed at those addressing particular issues, for example, in policy making
 - a service to allow printed extracts on demand in attractive standard forms, to meet the needs of the less sophisticated or occasional user.

Built in facilities

- 4.9 Users will have, for the first time, a comprehensive set of built-in facilities
- to enable the dataset to be accessed at a variety of levels appropriate to, say, a school child, a community worker, a public sector professional, a policy maker or adviser, or an elected representative
 - to enter the dataset by various routes including
 - overviews painting general pictures
 - topics or issues

- places (via lists or maps)
 - statistical criteria such as rankings
- to be able to export the data into other systems for analysis
 - to provide instant access to explanation of terms, background on Census methods, the quality of the information, and any cautionary notes on use
 - to link or cross-reference to other National Statistics information, particularly where statistics on the same topics are available from more than one source.

Response to change

- 4.10 An over-riding aim, which is part of Government policy published in the White Paper on the 2001 Census, is to maintain a responsive approach throughout the project and period of service to keep abreast of changes in user requirements and technology.

A wider roll out

- 4.11 A part of the project, the possibility will be examined of delivering non-Census information alongside the 2001 Census information using the same statistical and geographical frameworks. An example of such information might be estimates of income levels in local areas derived from administrative sources or sample surveys. Additionally, the infrastructure could be used to deliver up-dated information after 2001, or other statistical information on neighbourhoods similarly needed for use in joint working. An example would be a national small area dataset created to help tackle the problems of social exclusion.

5. BENEFITS TO USERS

- 5.1 The 2001 Census will provide the definitive set of statistics with sufficient detail about communities at ward level and below to assist the carrying out of cross government initiatives in a consistent way. This project will open the way for joint working. Better access to Census output will inform policy making and enable improved decision making and planning, and will also open the information to the wider community. The single service will reduce bureaucracy, save time, and lower direct costs both to ONS, the supplier, and to customers.

- 5.2 Benefits to all users will include:

- a single service without the cost and effort of making separate arrangements and payments
- encouragement of joint approaches to analysis, without concerns over data ownership or access, provided that use is for public sector purposes
- a comprehensive package facilitating value adding support services.

Users with ready access to electronic tools will get 'desktop' access to the results of the Census with easy to use software. This will be the first time that UK Census data will be accompanied by software. The project, however, will also do as much as possible to provide simplified access to statistical information for members of the public, which will include serving those without electronic tools.

Joint working

- 5.3 Joint working in the public sector will be facilitated in particular by

- promotion of, and preparation in advance for, the opportunities for joint working
- different organisations being able to work in a 'common currency' of generally available statistical information and supporting material

- the removal of barriers which have hindered joint use of the Census information for public sector purposes
- immediate access by any public sector organisation to the dataset, particularly when policy issues demand speedy resolution through joint action
- the opening up of the information to parts of the public sector previously without access or poorly informed about the opportunities for using the data.

Benefits to the public

- 5.4 Many of the benefits to the public will come through the improved quality of services provided by public sector organisations. More direct benefit will come from the greater availability of the Census information via the Internet and in other forms to schools for educational purposes, in part as a teaching resource but also for use in students' own researches. Members of the public or community groups will also be able to have 'hands on' access to the information directly via on-line access at home or in libraries, or via printed extracts provided by intermediaries such as libraries or on request from the Census Offices. The project will provide users with induction and back-up so that informed use is made of the information.
- 5.5 The private sector will also benefit from the improved software and services arising from the project, either directly as end users or as licensed value adding re-sellers to the private sector.

Risks and contingencies

- 5.6 The main external risk to the project is delay in the earlier stages of the Census with a knock-on effect on the output timetable. But there is a built in contingency that, once developed, the value of the services, even with delayed output, would remain. The main internal risk is of failure to implement the wide range of innovations that will take the Census into a new era of electronically based dissemination. But the developments envisaged have been successfully tried elsewhere in some form, so the project is not carrying a high risk from 'leading edge' technology. Other risks and contingencies are summarised in the following table.

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Contingency</i>
Planned deliverables could be too numerous, diverse or ambitious, and resources could be too thinly spread	Set and review priorities in consultation with users, fully cost all developments and implement processes to monitor all current and planned spending within the project
Services could be over-prescriptive	Build in responsiveness and flexibility of approach
Widespread and easy access to Census information could increase the level of unauthorised use for non public sector purposes and result in loss of cost recovery income	Devise attractive deals for commercial uses
Costs of keeping up with user requirements or technology could be under-estimated	Develop a maintenance strategy, including options of user funded upgrades

- 5.7 Census Access is not a high risk project, and, overall, the risks are manageable. This will be helped by the modular nature of the deliverables and the progressive benefits that they will give. At worst, if there is a timetable over-run or a resource shortfall, a substantial part of the deliverables will already be in place.

6. ESTIMATED SAVING/IMPROVED QUALITY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICE

- 6.1 The main financial objective of the project is to improve the quality and effective uses of services. The bid for ISB funding contained a detailed economic appraisal which explained that such elements cannot easily be quantified in money terms, but explained that the public sector resources involved are valued in billions of pounds, and the appraisal allocated a high weighting to features which will improve services in such areas.
- 6.2 The economic appraisal considered a number of options for the dissemination of Census output. In summary, the conclusions were that, if the 1991 Census arrangements were followed for 2001, organisations would start to spend significant sums in 2001-02 on the preparation to use the Census results. Whilst some preparations will still be required, the avoidance of duplicated effort, and savings to the suppliers provides a net financial advantage to a single service. The conclusion was that the Census Access option, as well as offering to contribute most to the improvement of the quality and effectiveness of services, will achieve savings compared with the other options evaluated.

7. ADDITIONALITY

- 7.1 An important criterion for an ISB project is that it *adds* to work already planned. The case made in the bid was that, without support from ISB, the activities which could be covered by Census core funding, under the Census legislation, would not be sufficient to meet the objectives of the project. Whilst a level of co-ordination would be achieved without support, as it has been after previous Censuses, many organisations would obtain what they required from the 2001 Census in a slower, often partial, and less cost-effective way, with the end result being something of a matter of chance.

- 7.2 With the support from ISB the project will be able to:

- develop dissemination services up-front as an integrated package, promoting best practice and avoiding duplication of effort
- 'prime the pump' by covering about half the cost of creating the dataset, encouraging a joint approach to the funding of the remaining cost already indicated by key players joining the project as partners
- guarantee access to Census information from the outset, allowing organisations to devote resources to developing applications to meet the needs of modern government through joint working.
- put a positive emphasis on providing services for individuals, community groups and school children, who otherwise would be partly dependent on the goodwill and generally unco-ordinated efforts of intermediaries scattered among public sector organisations.

ISB support will provide benefits which will help to bring key players together. It will also make an important asset available to the many parts of the public sector that currently lack the funding or know-how to commission output for themselves.

- 7.3 The difference that ISB support will make can be summarised in terms of the six key components of the project described in paragraph 1.4 of the introduction.

Component	Outcome of ISB Support
Policy framework	A reactive stance becomes an active stance
User community	Barriers to joint working are broken down
Dataset	Combined into an integrated package
Service to deliver the data	Timely provision avoids duplication of effort
Tools to access the data	Supplied for the first time with the Census information
Longer term strategy	Potential to 'roll out' to deliver other statistical information

8. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Accounts and audit

- 8.1 ONS will take the lead in implementing the project, and in managing the accounting and audit processes. Services and data would remain in the ownership of the Crown, with delegation of copyright management by HMSO to ONS. Conditions of use would encourage joint working for public sector purposes, with separate conditions and agreements for commercial use.

Monitoring and evaluation

Project timetable and monitoring

- 8.2 The project will run through pilot, development and delivery phases over the period 2000-2003, with the broad timetable

Year 1 – investigate and evaluate options, carry out market research, launch, promote and publicise the service

Year 2 – develop and test of the service; deliver first phase, pre-Census information

Year 3 – full implementation; provide access to the 2001 dataset

Year 4 onwards – maintain service.

From 2003-04 onwards, the service would be fully maintained, enhanced where required, and updated technically, ultimately to be reviewed before a possible 2011 Census. Further funding beyond 2002-03 could be provided by users, or from central funds if available.

- 8.3 Monitoring of progress would be carried out primarily through the project management system described in paragraphs 9.7 to 9.12.

Evaluation – working with users

- 8.4 The Census Offices have a good record of working with users through consultation. Evaluation of the impact of the project throughout its three year cycle, and in following years, would be carried out at a number of levels

- through the existing Census advisory machinery where groups represent government organisations, the health service, local government, and the universities

- through existing Census working groups, which bring together users with special expertise
- through liaison with bodies representing intermediaries in the dissemination of information such as libraries
- through a well publicised facility for feedback from users, particularly to improve services and products, coupled with periodic focussed surveys of the various user sectors and systematic review by independent experts.

8.5 Every effort would be made to develop a community of the users of Census Access to assist evaluation and improvement of the service – an extension of a successful current approach – although occasional users would receive exactly the same level of service. Regular news of developments would be available to all users, with an emphasis on feedback.

8.6 In particular, a post implementation review would be carried out in 2005 to check with users the extent to which the aims and expected benefits of the project had been realised. Key indicators of the degree of success would be

- no part of the public sector had been excluded in any way
- no barriers to joint working remained
- services had kept pace with technological developments
- any deficiencies in the system had been promptly remedied
- no part of the public sector had felt it necessary to set up parallel infrastructure
- better value for money had been provided
- use of Census information had extended within the public sector
- innovations had brought clear benefits
- users felt fully involved in the processes.

A key output of the post implementation review would be documentation of lessons learned for implementation in the later years of the service from the 2001 Census, in any future Census, and in any wider ‘roll out’ for other statistical information.

Project management

8.7 The project will be run jointly with partners from the public sector (see Section 1.17–1.26). The partners will be acting on behalf of the wider community, implementing better government through the co-operation of government departments and other public organisations. ONS is both a supplier and a customer, and will act as the lead organisation for accountability and audit purposes.

8.8 The project will be run under ONS project management practice (based upon the PRINCE2 methods). A project board will have representatives from the partner organisations, including ONS, one of whom would fill the role of board chairman. The project will also be accountable to the 2001 Census Programme Board (which brings together the three UK Census organisations, if the project was implemented on a UK basis). Formal quality assurance procedures will be applied at all levels of the project.

Project Board

8.9 A project manager would be responsible for the project on a day to day basis on behalf of a Project Board which it is proposed should comprise of:

- ONS Finance Officer
- Partner representatives:
 - Central government
 - The Welsh Assembly
 - NHS
 - Local Authorities
 - ESRC (for the universities)
 - Representatives of users

outside the funding partner organisations
The project manager

together with representatives of GRO(S) and NISRA, and partners in Scotland and Northern Ireland, if the project was implemented on a UK basis.

- 8.10 The ONS Finance Officer would represent the fund holding organisation, with the role of ensuring that the project gave value for money and of balancing the interests of all parties involved in the project. Decisions would be guided by the principles and objectives of ISB throughout the project (see following section : Conclusion – meeting Invest to Save criteria).
- 8.11 The partner representatives would be particularly responsible for ensuring that products are fit for purposes and meet user needs.

CONCLUSION – MEETING INVEST TO SAVE CRITERIA

The partners in the project consider that access to information is at the heart of joint working to modernise government. Invest to Save provides an ideal opportunity to break down barriers and to facilitate access to Census information, and, in doing so, will successfully meet key criteria of the Invest to Save initiative.

- **Additionality** – ISB support will allow the Census Offices to take an active stance to meet the needs of modernised government, and to do this sufficiently early to avoid duplication of effort. The new money from ISB will give benefits which will help to draw all key players together. Without ISB support, the stance would have been more reactive. The core funding of the Census under current legislation could not alone deliver the up-front improvements required.
- **Innovation** – the project will be a principal means of meeting the Government's intention that technological developments should be harnessed to improve the accessibility and user-friendliness of Census output. The project is designed to serve the whole of the public sector from the outset, but it has a clear potential to be 'rolled out' to supply statistical information from sources other than the Census to which access is required for joint working.
- **Benefits** – appraisal of the project indicates that it will significantly help with better service delivery to the public, and there will also be savings in expenditure which can be re-invested by the Census Offices to further improve services and by the user organisations in earlier and better application of the Census information.
- **Project Management** – particular strengths of the project will be the close relationship with Census users and their continuous role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of the service. The oversight of the project will involve the key players in the public sector.
- **Accountability and audit** – ONS will be responsible for project accounting and audit, and will follow standard government procedures. The project has a clear outline plan for the deployment of resources, which will progressively deliver a series of services and products, all valuable in their own right, giving a low risk of a poor return on the ISB funding.

The Census is a high profile Government activity, reaching every household in the country. Elected representatives and the media want to know that the effort put into collecting the information brings benefits to everyone in the country in a way which is in line with current Government policies. A major project to ensure that the Census serves the needs of modernised government will not only make a critical contribution to the success of the Census itself, but is a high profile opportunity to demonstrate that the policies of modernised government are being implemented.

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